

*Letter to Julia*

Yola Gray

Dear Julia,

I really think we ought to reconsider washing on the platform in the dead of night when we are in the village. Apart from the fact that there are thousands of mosquitoes hovering around intent on injecting us with malaria (yet again), it has come to my attention that washing in the dead of night on the platform is not, shall we say, in my best interest. Apart from the fact that you are first blood and therefore it is my job (being the not-so-important younger sister) to pump and then carry infinite amounts of water in buckets on my head across the road, through the mud, while dodging pigs, chickens, cousins, and other pests attracted to the idea of watching me flounder, slip, and drench myself, it is quite dangerous.

I refer to the night you washed on the platform steps and I washed on the actual platform. You may well remember that you left the step slimy with soap and did not bother to rinse it off. I believe that this is perhaps the main reason that I, after rinsing properly on the platform, somehow managed to find myself on my back in the middle of a puddle of mud. If you had told me that the step was slippery, I might have taken greater care when stepping on it, and not have found myself completing a full somersault in the air and nearly breaking my neck in the process. I must say, however, that it was my quick reflexes and perhaps a bit of luck that prevented the towel I was wearing from making its escape and showcasing “the goods,” so to speak, while I completed this aerial display.

You might also remember the scene that followed. I do not think that anybody in the village (perhaps even people in New Ireland) would be in any doubt that it was me who was lying sprawled, semi-naked, in a puddle of mud. No, I think that your shouting at me was pretty much heard by everyone. I am in no doubt that they knew it was me who tried to be the next “skin glow like fluoro” comet, because you were yelling in English. Who else would be yelling in English in the middle of the village in the dead of night? I realize that you were worried that I had in fact broken my back—how could I not realize,

when you were yelling in my face, “Speak to me! And don’t you dare be dead.” But I also think you should not have taken offense when I not-so-politely told you to “fuck off!” I was in pain, after all, and would have preferred your help rewashing rather than watching you flounce off in a huff. I do hope you will take this into consideration the next time we foolishly decide to wash in the dead of night on the platform.

I was also going to write about how inconsiderate it is of you to rush a person through her ablutions. Spending a good part of the day walking around with the back of my skirt tucked into my underpants is not my idea of a good time. I shall, however, save that for another letter.

Many Regards,

Yola, your slightly frustrated, next in line to be first blood, younger sister.

YOLA GRAY is of mixed Papua New Guinean and Australian heritage. Yola’s Papua New Guinean family are from the Kairuku district of the Central Province of Papua New Guinea. She is a founding member of Sunameke Pacific Island Performance and is a single mum to Vasa.